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TRACY OF TOBRUK

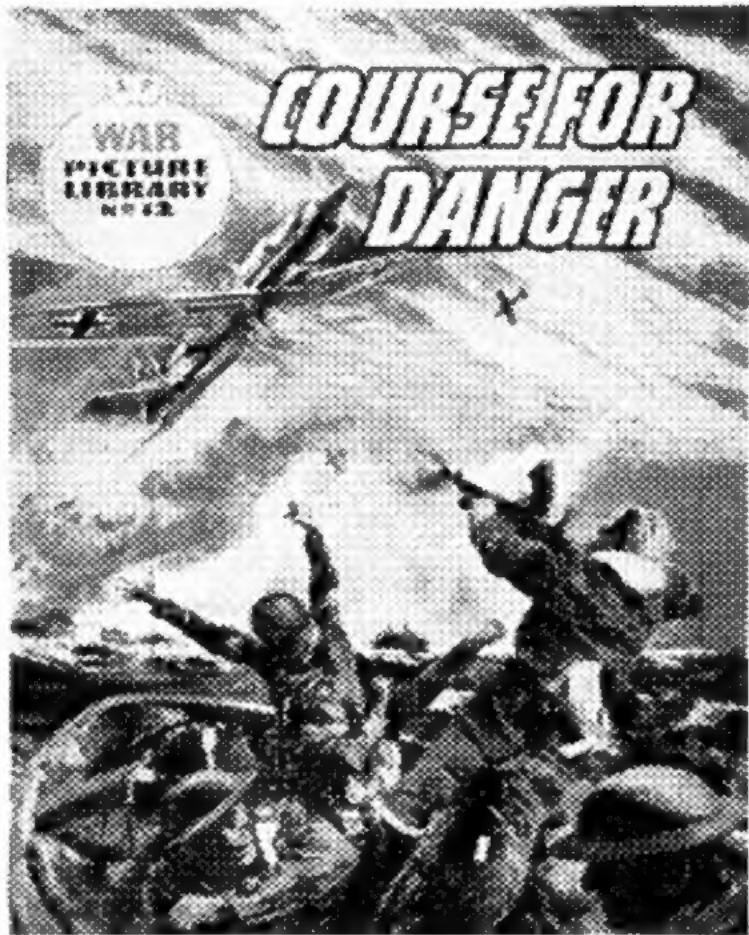


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TRACY OF TOBRUK

STIRRING TALES OF INCREDIBLE COURAGE AND DARING EMERGED FROM THE SEETHING CAULDRON OF THE NORTH AFRICAN CAMPAIGN WAGED IN THE LAST WAR. FOR TWO GRUELING YEARS OF SAVAGE DESERT FIGHTING, THE TWO GIANT OPPONENTS, THE EIGHTH ARMY ALLIES AND GENERAL ROMMEL'S AFRIKA KORPS, WERE LOCKED IN A DEATH-GRAPPLE WHICH RAGED FROM LIBYA TO EGYPT AND BACK AGAIN. SELDOM WAS OUR SAFETY MORE IMPERILLED THAN IN THE YEAR 1941 WHEN THE ENEMY'S ARMoured MIGHT OVERRAN TOWN AFTER TOWN. FINALLY IT ENCIRCLED, BUT NEVER SUCCEEDED IN TAKING, THE INDOMITABLE GARRISON OF TOBRUK, WHOSE VERY NAME WAS TO RING LIKE A BUGLE-CALL OF DEFiance.



*Chapter 1.***ESCAPE FROM TOBRUK**

WHILE SOME TROOPS WERE CAUGHT WITHIN TOBRUK ITSELF, OTHERS HACKED THEIR WAY CLEAR BY SHEER FORCE OF CHARACTER AND SPIRIT. SUCH A GROUP WAS LED BY CAPTAIN BILL TRACY, AN OFFICER IN A BRITISH ARMOURED CAR UNIT.



RALLYING THE REMNANTS OF HIS ARMOURED CAR UNIT, BILL TRACY LED THEM AGAINST THE FULL MIGHT OF THE 20 TH GERMAN ARMoured CAR REGIMENT CROWDING THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOBRUK.



TRACY'S MEN FOUGHT WITH DESPERATION AND, AT LAST, THE COLUMN OF ARMOURED CARS HAD BROKEN THROUGH THE ENCIRCLEMENT OF GERMAN TANKS. TRACY SMILED AS HE SAW A GERMAN OFFICER FROM A WRECKED TANK RUNNING FOR HIS LIFE. EVEN IN THAT DIRE MOMENT THE YOUNG CAPTAIN COULD NOT RESIST A SPOT OF HORSEPLAY:



Tracy of Sobruk

BLACKIE WESTON, THE DRIVER, EXPERTLY STEERED THE CAR SO THAT BILL COULD LEAN OVER AND GRAB THE STARTLED OFFICER BY HIS BELT.



TRACY CARRIED THE STRUGGLING MAN FOR A FEW YARDS AND THEN IGNOMINIOUSLY DROPPED HIM.



BY THE AFTERNOON TRACY'S LITTLE COLUMN
THANKFULLY GAINED THE ALLIED LINES
SOME MILES EAST OF TOBRUK.

BEEN TO
THE PICTURES,
MATE!

TRUST YOU
TO KNOW WHEN
IT'S TEA-TIME!

WHEN HE WAS CLEANED UP AND REFRESHED,
TRACY AND HIS DRIVER WERE CALLED
BEFORE THE STAFF PLANNING OFFICERS
WHO WERE INTERESTED IN THEIR
ESCAPE FROM TOBRUK.

WE ARE MOUNTING A COUNTER-
ATTACK IN ORDER TO RELIEVE
THE GARRISON INSIDE TOBRUK.
YOUR EXPERIENCE
COULD BE USEFUL.

WE WANT
TO KNOW WHERE
YOU BROKE
THROUGH ... AND
WHAT ENEMY
YOU MET.

I'LL TELL
YOU ALL I CAN
SIR!

Tracy of Tobruk

THE FOLLOWING MORNING TRACY WAS CALLED IN AGAIN... THIS TIME FOR A FAR MORE STARTLING REASON.

CAPTAIN TRACY, AS PART OF THE COUNTER ATTACK, WE ARE GOING TO DEPLOY A FLYING COLUMN TO HARRY THE REAR OF THAT GERMAN ARMOURED REGIMENT YOU MET YESTERDAY. AND WE THINK YOU'RE THE MAN TO LEAD IT.

COME AND LOOK AT THIS MAP, TRACY.

BILL TRACY LEARNED THAT HIS COLUMN WAS TO DRIVE INTO THE SOUTHERLY DESERT AND THEN TO COME UP BEHIND THE GERMAN ARMOURED CARS.

YOU WILL ATTACK IN THE REAR WITH AS MUCH NOISE AS YOU CAN MAKE AND THUS DRAW THE ENEMY'S ATTENTION WHILE THE TOBRUK GARRISON BREAKS OUT TO JOIN THE MAIN RELIEVING FORCE.

SURPRISE IS IMPERATIVE, SO TRAVEL BY NIGHT. YOU MUST BE THERE AT DAWN IN THREE DAYS TIME, TO COINCIDE WITH THE MAIN ASSAULT. IS THAT CLEAR?

I QUITE UNDERSTAND, SIR.

THRILLED WITH HIS SPECIAL MISSION, TRACY CAREFULLY PICKED HIS MEN AND VEHICLES. HE CHOSE HIS TRUSTY FRIEND BOB WATSON, AS HIS SECOND-IN-COMMAND.

WE HAVE TO TRAVEL BY NIGHT FOR THREE NIGHTS, BOB... GETTING TO TOBRUK AT DAWN.

... HIDING UP BY DAY, I TAKE IT. THIS SOUNDS AS IF IT HAS THE MAKINGS OF AN INTERESTING SHOW!

THAT EVENING, JUST BEFORE THE START, TRACY HAD A FEW WORDS WITH HIS MEN.

WELL, CHAPS, WE'RE RUNNING TO A PRETTY TIGHT SCHEDULE... SO WHATEVER HAPPENS, KEEP GOING... AND KEEP TOGETHER., AND GOOD LUCK.

Tracy of Tobruk

A FINAL CHECK-OVER AND THE
ARMoured COLUMN MOVED OFF
ACROSS THE DESERT, BACK
TOWARDS THE ENEMY LINES.



Tracy of Tobruk.

BY NIGHTFALL THEY HAD PENETRATED ENEMY COUNTRY, AND TRACY WAS NOT ALTOGETHER SURPRISED WHEN HIS SCOUT CAR REPORTED A GERMAN MOTORISED UNIT BIVOUACKING ROUND CAMP FIRES. WITH BOB WATSON AND THE SCOUT, TRACY WENT FORWARD ON FOOT TO RECCE THE GERMAN POSITION.

THERE'S NO GETTING AROUND THAT LOT, SIR, THEY'RE SITTING BETWEEN TWO GREAT STRETCHES OF SOFT SAND.

LOOKS LIKE WE'LL HAVE TO FIGHT OUR WAY THROUGH, BOB.

THERE SEEMS NO ALTERNATIVE, BILL. LET'S GET BACK TO THE COLUMN AND GET MOVING!

TRACY'S ORDERS WERE PASSED BACK DOWN THE COLUMN AND THEN, AT A GIVEN SIGNAL, THE ARMoured CARS AND TRUCKS ROARED TO LIFE... AND SPED FROM BEHIND THE COVER OF A GULLY TOWARDS THE GERMAN CAMP.

ATTACK! ATTACK!

THE PATROL CHARGED THE STARTLED
ENEMY WITH ALL GUNS BLAZING.

LET
'EM HAVE
IT!

ACH!



ACHTUNG...
DER BRITISH...

AAGH!



IN TWO MINUTES TRACY'S COLUMN
HAD COME AND GONE LIKE A
STREAM OF FLYING ROCKETS;
LEAVING THE GERMANS TO
STAND GAPPING AFTER THEM.



BUT JUST BEFORE MIDNIGHT THE COLUMN RAN INTO TROUBLE.

UNLUCKY, SIR. JUST CAUGHT THE EDGE OF A SOFT BIT BUT WE SHOULDN'T BE LONG GETTING HER OUT...

RIGHT... LET'S GET ORGANISED...



IT TOOK LONGER THAN EXPECTED TO DRAG THE CAR FREE. MEANWHILE THE MAIN BODY WAITED, WONDERING WHETHER THE ENEMY WAS GIVING CHASE.

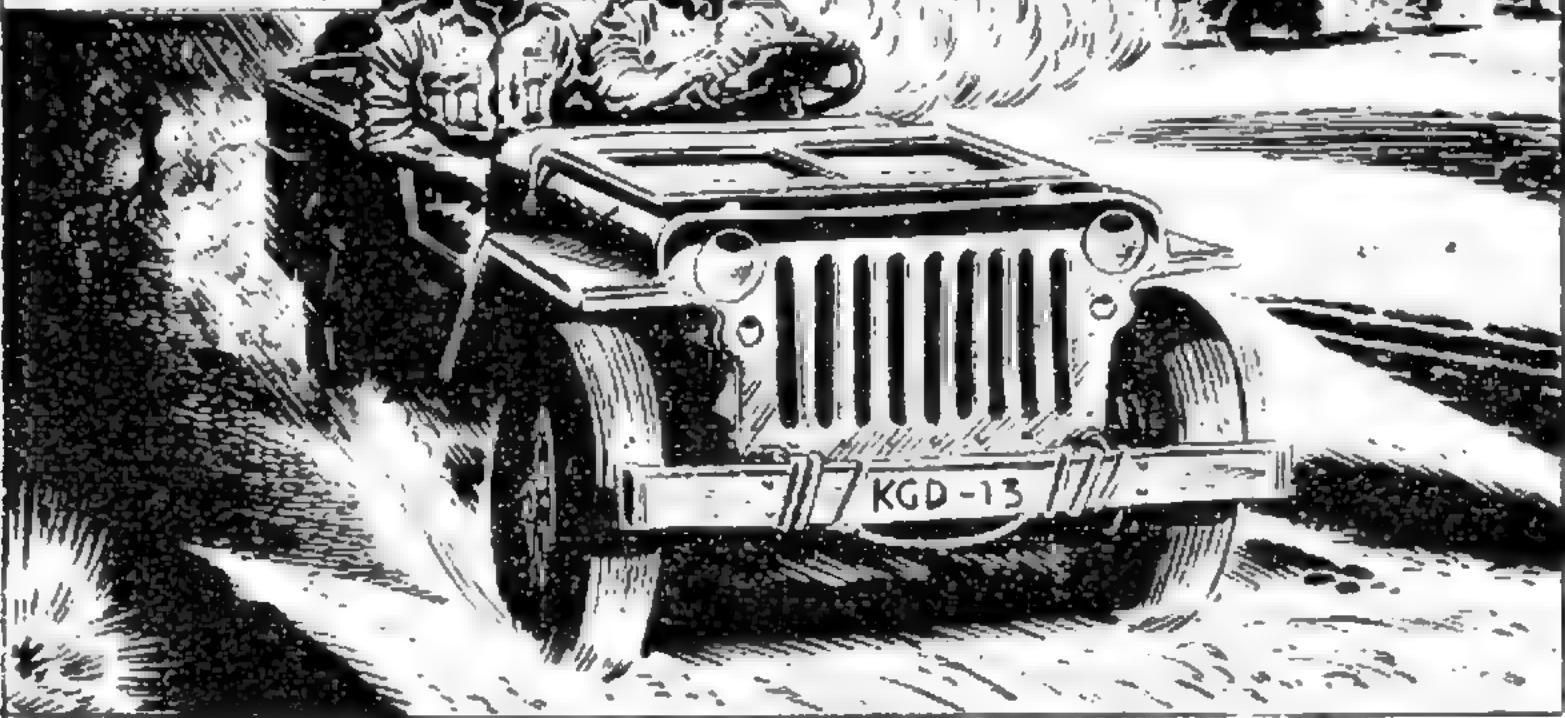
EASY... STEADY DOES IT!



ONCE MORE THE COLUMN MOVED ON AND TRACY STAYED BEHIND TO DO A LITTLE RECCE IN THE REAR. BLACKIE EXPRESSED HIMSELF LIKE THE LONDON BOXING FAN HE WAS.

GOOD! NOW, BLACKIE, LET'S SEE IF WE'RE BEING CHASED.

CHASED! THOSE JERRIES WENT CLEAN THROUGH THE ROPES...AND THEY AIN'T BACK YET!



BUT AS BLACKIE REVERSED, IT BECAME THE JEEP'S TURN TO GET STUCK IN THE TREACHEROUS SAND!

THE WHEEL'S SPINNING, BLACKIE! I'LL GIVE THE JEEP A HEAVE.

WELL,
WOULD YOU
ADAM-AND-EVE
IT!



Tracy of Tobruk

TO TRACY'S CONCERN HE AND BLACKIE DID NOT GET THE JEEP FREE UNTIL THE DAWN. IT WAS A VERY DISGUSTED PAIR OF BRITISH SOLDIERS WHO CLIMBED BACK READY TO MOVE ON.

WE'RE BEHIND TIME. WE'LL HAVE TO GET CRACKING, BLACKIE!

I'LL STEP ON IT TILL IT HURTS!

AT THAT MOMENT THE GROWING ROAR OF A LOW-FLYING AIRCRAFT MADE TRACY HESITATE.



HOLD IT, BLACKIE. WHAT'S THIS?

KEEP STILL, SIR... IT'S AN ETTIE PLANE!

BUT THE ITALIAN FIGHTER-BOMBER HAD SPOTTED THEM. BLACKIE LEAPT CLEAR, BUT TRACY WAS NOT SO LUCKY.

COME ON, SIR! JUMP FOR IT!

UH:
HE'S GOT ME
...MY LEG!



WITH ONE EYE ON THE CIRCLING AIRCRAFT, BLACKIE DRAGGED TRACY UNDER A NEARBY ROCK.

THE PERISHER'S COMING BACK, SIR! HERE, LET'S GET YOU UNDER COVER!



Tracy of Tobruk

TO THEIR AMAZEMENT HOWEVER, THE PLANE CALLED OFF THE SECOND ATTACK, AND LANDED: IN A MOMENT THEY SAW THE PILOT STEPPING OUT.



BUT AS THE PILOT DREW NEAR AND SPOKE IN PERFECT ENGLISH, TRACY REALISED THAT THIS WAS NO ORDINARY ITALIAN AIRMAN.

GOOD MORNING, GENTLEMEN! MY NAME IS MARIO FORZIA. I ATTACKED YOU ON AN IMPULSE. YOU WERE DEFENCELESS. WE ITALIANS DO NOT DO THAT.

I MUST APOLOGISE.



VERY DECENT; I MUST SAY, BUT WHAT ARE BLACKIE AND I SUPPOSED TO DO... WALK? AND DIE OF THIRST!

I TOLD MYSELF... ON SUCH A BEAUTIFUL MORNING, NO MAN SHOULD DIE. SO I TAKE YOU PRISONER, PLEASE.



WOUNDED AND WEAPONLESS TRACY GLOOMILY FELT HE COULD NOT VERY WELL ARGUE, BUT BLACKIE WAS INDIGNANT.



MARIO WAS GENUINELY SORRY.



PRESENTLY THE SMILING MARIO WAS BACK WITH A BOX OF FIELD-DRESSING... ALSO A LOAF AND A BOTTLE OF WINE. BLACKIE BLINKED IN AMAZEMENT. THIS WAS NOT HIS IDEA OF AN ENEMY.



TO BLACKIE'S FURTHER AMAZEMENT, MARIO EXPERTLY BANDAGED TRACY'S WOUNDED LEG.



HAVING MADE TRACY COMFORTABLE, THE IRREPRESSIBLE MARIO SHARED OUT THE LOAF AND WINE AND THEN BURST INTO SNATCHES OF SONG, EXPLAINING THAT IT MIGHT RAISE THEIR SPIRITS.

"O SOLE MIO..."



TRACY'S AMUSEMENT FADED
HOWEVER AT THE THOUGHT
OF HIS COLUMN. WHAT
WERE THEY DOING?

I HOPE
THEY'RE NOT
WASTING VALUABLE
TIME LOOKING
FOR ME.



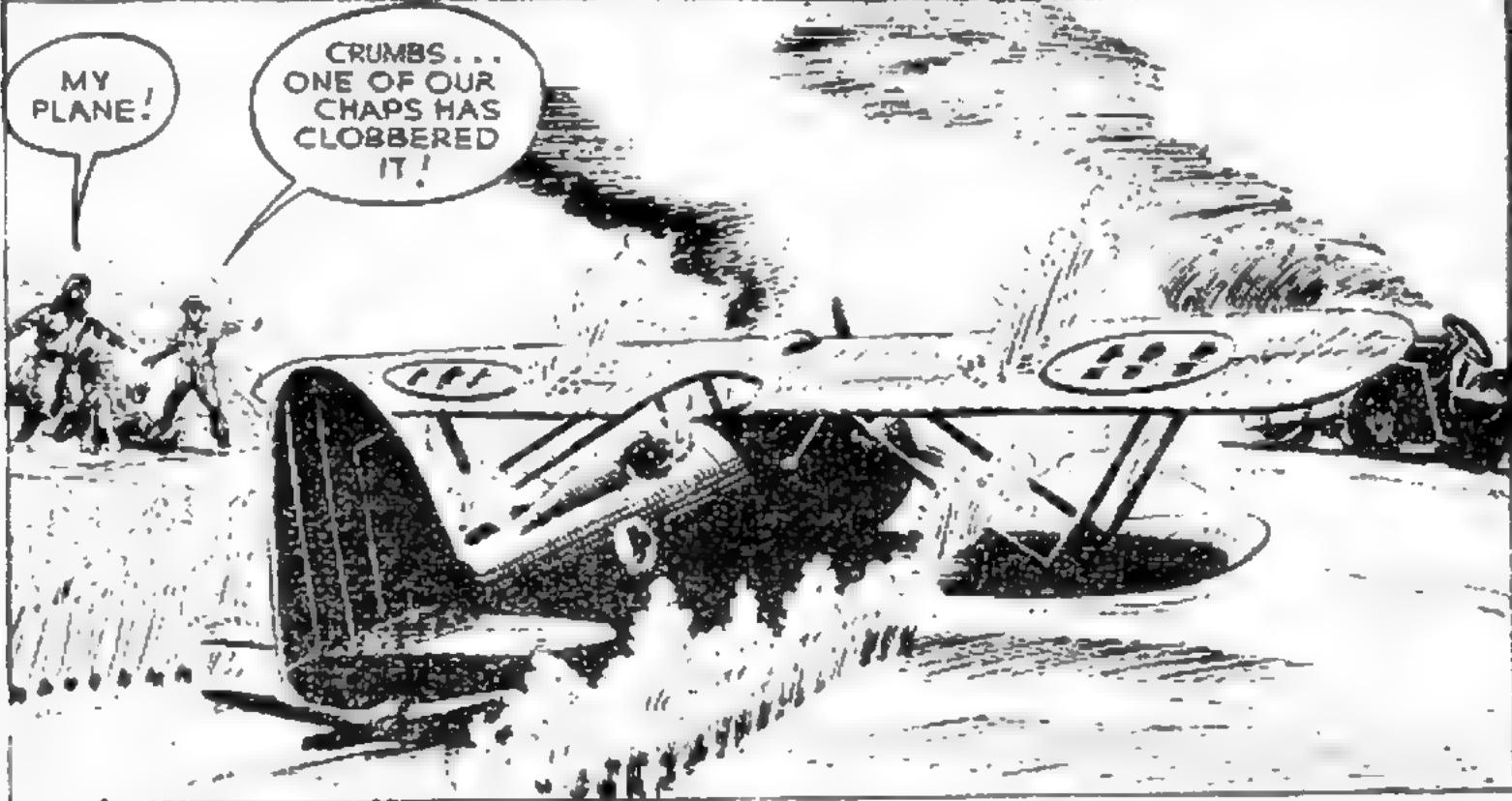
UNFORTUNATELY THE COLUMN WAS DOING JUST THAT. WORRIED AT TRACY'S NON-APPEARANCE BOB WATSON HAD SENT BACK SCOUTS. HE WAS NOT TO GUESS THAT THE SCOUTS WOULD LOSE THEIR BEARINGS AND NOT RETURN TILL LATE, THUS DELAYING THE NIGHT'S MARCH.

I'D GIVE THREE
MONTHS' PAY TO
KNOW WHAT'S
HAPPENED TO
BILL?



Tracy of Tobruk

MEANWHILE MARIO'S WELL-INTENTIONED SINGING WAS SHOCKED INTO SILENCE BY THE HARSH CHATTER OF MACHINE-GUNS. A BRITISH KITTHAWK HAD SPOTTED THE ITALIAN PLANE AND SWOOPED TO RIDDLE IT WITH INCENDIARY SHELLS.



MARIO'S VOICE NOW UTTERED NOTHING BUT DISMAY AT HIS LOST AIRCRAFT.



Chapter 2.

STRANDED!

GLOOMILY, ALL THREE TOOK STOCK OF THE SITUATION...

SACRAMENTO! WE
ARE DEEP IN THE
DESERT WITH ONLY
THIS WINE AND
BREAD... WHICH
WE MUST
SHARE.

WELL... THERE'S NO FRIEND
OR FOE ABOUT THIS AFFAIR
... WE'VE GOT TO HELP
EACH OTHER OR
DIE.

THAT'S
FINE, SIR...
BUT WHO IS WHOSE
PRISONER? THAT'S
A TRICKY
ONE!

MAYBE
WE'LL SETTLE
LATER WHO IS
PRISONER.

BUT OF COURSE,
IT DEPENDS WHO WE
NEXT MEET AS TO WHO
WILL BE PRISONER...
NO?

TEN-TO-ONE
THE FLIPPING
FIELD IT'LL BE
JERRIES!

SUDDENLY THERE APPEARED A ROVING BAND OF ARABS WHO REGARDED THEM IN OMNIBUS SILENCE.

ALLO... TROUBLE'S HERE!



THE DARKLY SILENT ARABS SIGNALLED ALL THREE TO MOUNT THE SPARE CAMELS, AND WITHOUT ANY EXPLANATION, MOVED OFF, HEADING FARTHER TO THE SOUTH.

COR... CAN'T SAY THEY TALK THEIR HEADS 'ORF!

MAYBE THEY'RE TAKING US TO THEIR CHIEF.



REACHING THE ARAB TENTS, ALL THREE WERE MADE TO WAIT WHILE THE CHIEF WAS INFORMED.

I WONDER... ARE THESE ARABS ON YOUR SIDE OR MINE, MARIO?

MUCH DEPENDS ON THE ANSWER, MY FRIEND. EITHER YOU OR I WILL BE THE PRISONER, YES?

LOOKS TO ME LIKE THE SHEIKH OF ARABY WON'T BE ANYBODY'S FRIEND!

BLACKIE'S GLOOMY FORECAST WAS ONLY TOO RIGHT. THE CHIEF ARAB WAS NOBODY'S FRIEND, AND THE QUESTION OF PRISONERS WAS SOON SETTLED.

INFIDELS!
YOU DESECRATE
OUR LAND WITH WAR.
YOU ARE MY
PRISONERS!

WHILST TRACY AND MARIO SPENT AN UNEASY NIGHT, BLACKIE SEEMED TO BE WORKING ON SOME IDEA...AND THE NEXT MORNING...



MOVING CLOSER THEY SAW THAT BLACKIE WAS POURING SOME WATER ON THE SAND, INTENTLY WATCHED BY THE CHIEF AND HIS HENCHMEN.

OBSERVE,
O LEADER OF THE FAITHFUL
...I POUR WATER ON THE SAND
AND WILL COMMAND
WHATEVER I DESIRE
TO APPEAR!



TO THE PUZZLEMENT
OF TRACY AND
MARIO AND THE
STARTLED FEAR
OF THE ARABS,
BLACKIE AMAZINGLY
PROVED HIS
WORDS.

I COMMAND
TO APPEAR...
A SCORPION.

BY ALLAN
A MAGNUM



THEN THE QUICK-WITTED BLACKIE PLAYED UPON THE SUPERSTITIONS FEAR HE HAD AROUSED IN THE ARABS . . .

THOU OPPRESSOR OF
THE WHITE MAN! RELEASE
US OR I WILL RAISE NOT
ONE BUT A THOUSAND
SCORPIONS AMONG
YOUR TENTS!



FILLED WITH DREAD AT BLACKIE'S
AWFUL THREAT, THE ARABS FLUNG
THE GRATEFUL TRIO BACK INTO
THE DESERT.

GO! THROW NOT
MY ACCURSED SHADOWS
ON OUR TENTS
AGAIN!

I THOUGHT
THAT WOULD DO
THE TRICK!



Tracy of Tobruk

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PAUSING TO REST THE LIMPING TRACY, BLACKIE PRODUCED HIS PLASTIC SCORPION AND EXPLAINED THE TRICK.

"WHY, IT'S ONLY A DUMMY SCORPION!"

"WELL DONE, BLACKIE! BUT HOW DID YOU DO IT?"

"YOU DIG A HOLE... STUFF IN SOME STRAW... COVER IT WITH SAND AND POUR WATER ON IT. THE WATER SWELLS THE STRAW WHICH PUSHES UP THE SAND AND ANYTHING ELSE YOU LIKE TO BURY. I BURIED MY MASOUT... THIS SCORPION! BOY THAT RATTLED 'EM!"

THRUST INTO THE PARCHING DESERT WITHOUT WATER, THE THREE BEGAN TO SUFFER FROM THIRST AND THE BLINDING GRIT STORMS.

"SORRY I'M A BURDEN. BUT THE OLD LEG'S GIVING OUT."

"YOU HAVE A BAD LEG, BUT A GOOD HEART, MY FRIEND!"

Tracy of Tobruk

BLACK-E'S KEEN EYES HAD BEEN WATCHING A DISTANT COLUMN OF DUST AND NOW HE SHOUTED FOR JOY.



IT PROVED TO BE A PARTY OF CHEERFUL SOUTH AFRICANS. THEY LISTENED TO TRACY'S STORY, AT THE SAME TIME PROPERLY DRESSING HIS WOUND AND HANDING OUT REFRESHMENT.

LEG OR NO LEG... I'VE GOT TO REJOIN MY COLUMN... AND PRETTY DARN QUICK!



FEELING REFRESHED AND MUCH RELIEVED
IN MIND, TRACY INTRODUCED MARIO.

MEET MY GOOD FRIEND.
MARIO FORZIA. HE HELPED
SAVE MY LIFE ALTHOUGH
I WAS HIS PRISONER.

SORRY.
MISTER FORZIA...
BUT IT'S YOUR TURN
TO BE PRISONER
NOW, EH?

IT IS THE
LUCK OF THE
WAR, SIGNOR.

THE OFFICER GAVE THEM HIS JEEP AND THE COLUMN SET OFF
IN PURSUIT OF TRACY'S MEN, WHO BY NOW WOULD BE FAR TO
THE NORTH. MARIO SANG AS IF NOTHING MATTERED.

DOESN'T OUR COLUMN HAVE
TO BE THERE BY FIRST
LIGHT TOMORROW,
MISTER TRACY?

THAT'S SO, BLACKIE.
I HOPE THEY'RE
KEEPING TO
SCHEDULE...

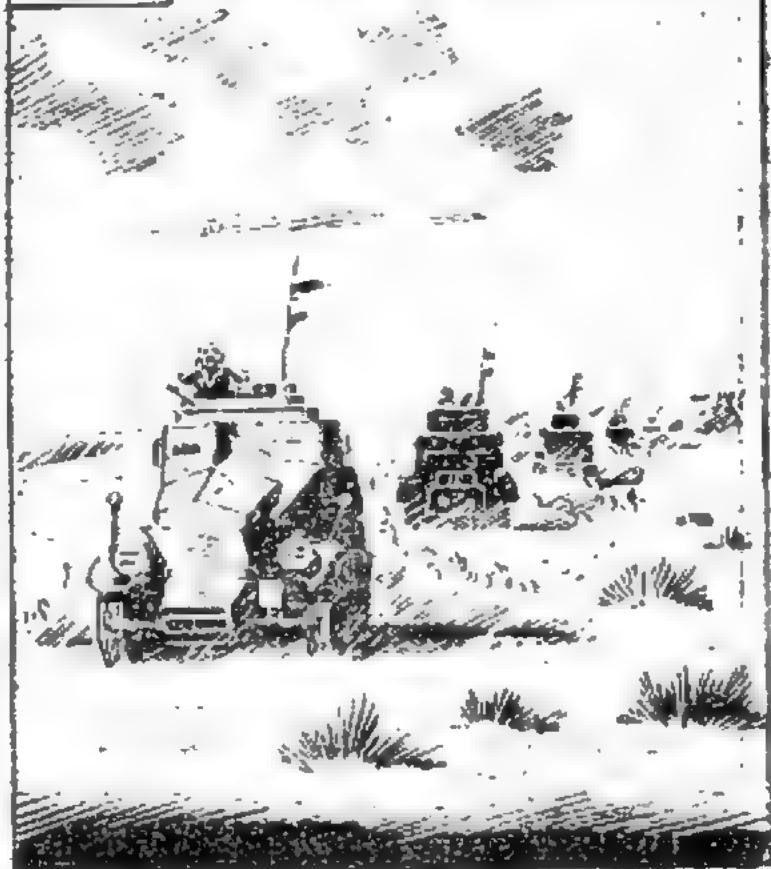
...BACK TO
SORRENTO.

BUT THE COLUMN WERE BEHIND SCHEDULE, AND THIS WORRIED BOB WATSON. OBLIGED TO HIDE BY DAY, THEY HAD NEVER RECOVERED THE TIME THEY HAD LOST IN LOOKING FOR TRACY AND BLACKIE.

WE'LL NEVER MAKE IT, BOB, UNLESS WE START NOW... IN DAYLIGHT.



SO BOB, AWARE THAT THE COLUMN WAS TRAILING BEHIND SCHEDULE, LED THEM BOLDLY IN DAYLIGHT AT A CRACKING PACE.



MEANWHILE THE SOUTH AFRICANS, FURTHER SOUTH AND IN HOT PURSUIT, HAD RUN INTO A STUKA DIVE-BOMBING ATTACK.



BARELY HAD THE ATTACK FINISHED, WHEN A FRESH THREAT CAME FROM SEVERAL GERMAN TANKS FIRING THEIR 75 MM GUNS, OUT-RANGING THE SOUTH AFRICANS WHO HAD TO WITHDRAW.

EVERYBODY
GET OUT OF
RANGE ...
QUICK!

LOOK OUT!
JERRY TANKS!



FRANTICALLY FOLLOWING THE SOUTH AFRICANS, BLACKIE'S ENGINE STALLED IN TRYING TO CLIMB AN ESCARPMENT.

WOW...
WE'RE STUCK!



TO TRACY'S DISMAY
AND MARIO'S DELIGHT,
THE JEEP COULD NOT
BE BUDGED.

WE'VE
HAD IT,
BLACKIE.

COR...
SORRY ABOUT THIS,
MISTER TRACY!

THE LUCK
OF THE WAR...
YES?



WHEN THE GERMAN TANK LEADER DREW LEVEL, THERE WAS AN ARGUMENT... BUT IT WAS MARIO WHO HAD THE LAST WORD.

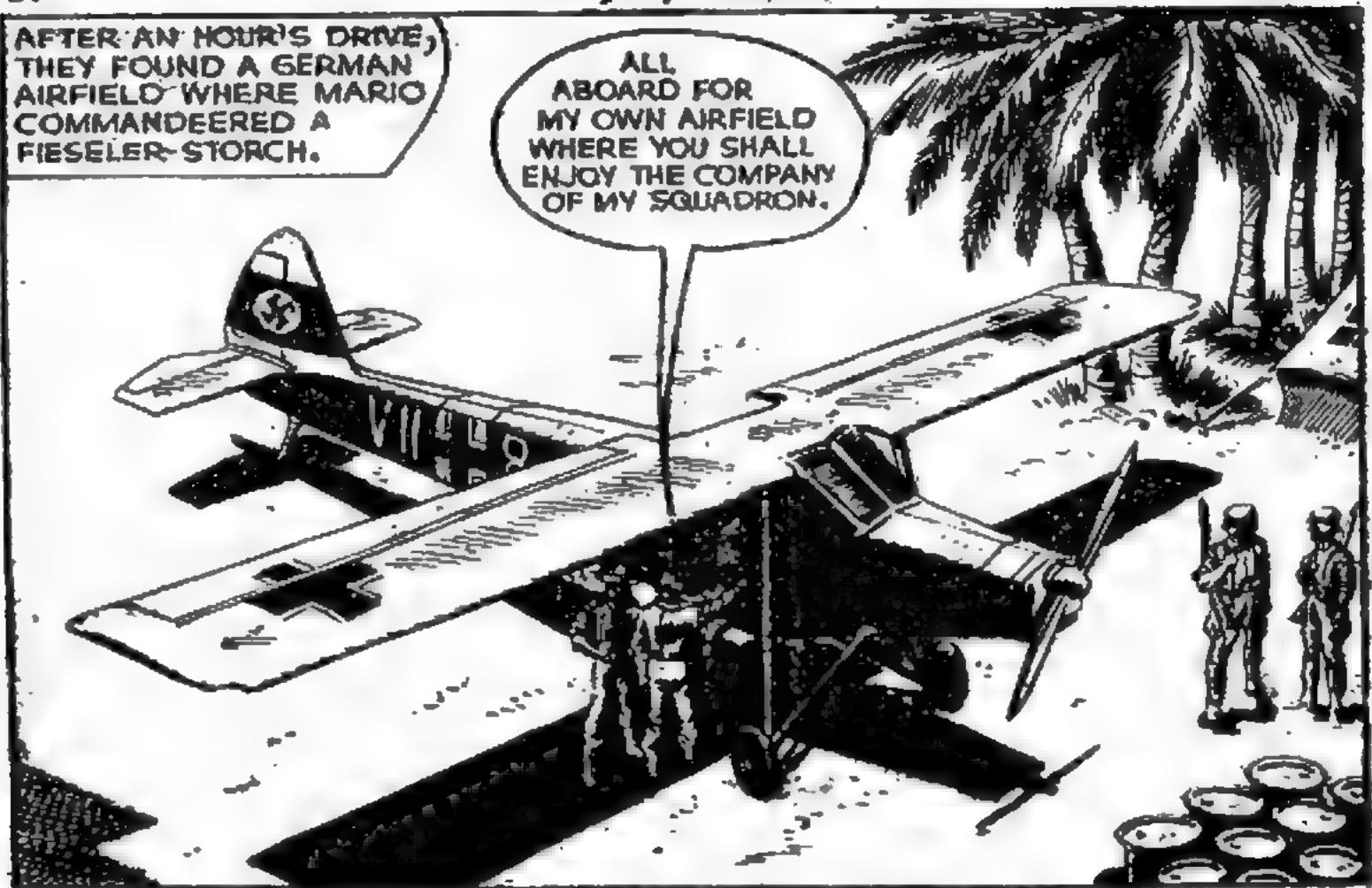


WITH THE JEEP RIGHTED ONCE MORE, MARIO TOOK THE WHEEL, EXPLAINING THAT THEY WOULD FIRST FIND AN AIRFIELD, THEN FLY TO HIS OWN BASE.



AFTER AN HOUR'S DRIVE,
THEY FOUND A GERMAN
AIRFIELD WHERE MARIO
COMMANDERED A
FIESELER-STORCH.

ALL
ABOARD FOR
MY OWN AIRFIELD
WHERE YOU SHALL
ENJOY THE COMPANY
OF MY SQUADRON.



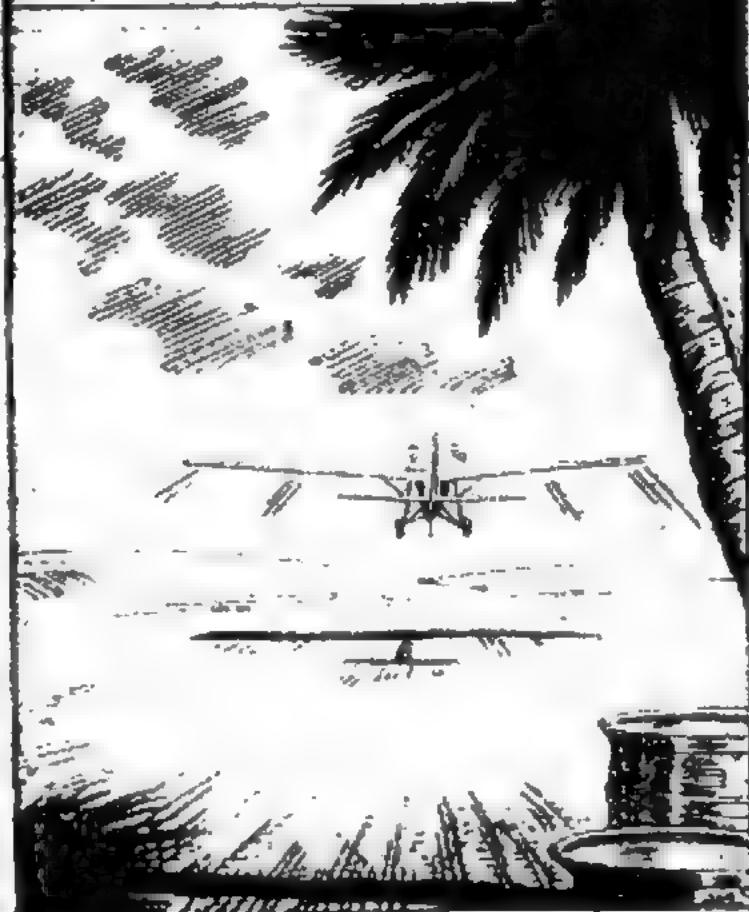
WHILE MARIO SIGNED FOR THE AIRCRAFT,
TRACY TOOK THE CHANCE TO SPEAK TO
BLACKIE.

DON'T TRY TO ESCAPE,
BLACKIE. IF MISTER FORZIA IS FLYING US
NEAR TOBRUK MAYBE WE'LL GET A
CHANCE TO SLIP AWAY AND JOIN UP
WITH THE BOYS.



OKAY, SIR.

PRESENTLY ALL WAS READY
AND MARIO TOOK OFF.



FARTHER NORTH BOB WATSON KEPT UP A ROARING SPEED WITH ANXIOUS EYES ON THE ENEMY HORIZON. MIRACULOUSLY THEY HAD NOT YET BEEN SPOTTED. WOULD THEIR LUCK HOLD OUT TILL DARK?



AFTER A LONG SILENCE, SAVE FOR HIS SINGING, MARIO SUDDENLY TILTED HIS PLANE AND POINTED DOWNWARD. A GLAD SIGHT MET TRACY'S EYES... IT WAS HIS OWN COLUMN. QUICKLY HE STOPPED BLACKIE FROM SAYING SO AND BEGAN TO THINK FURIOUSLY.

SOME BRITISH...
VERY BRAVE... LONG
WAY INSIDE OUR
LINES.

YES...
I WONDER
WHAT THEY'RE
UP TO?

Tracy of Tobruk

BUT TRACY'S FIRST JOY GAVE WAY TO FEARS. BOB WAS TRAVELLING IN DAYLIGHT AND GOING VERY FAST... THAT MEANT HE KNEW HE WAS BEHIND TIME.



JUDGING THE MILES BOB HAD YET TO GO BY THE PALL OF SMOKE OVER TOBRUK, TRACY FEARED THAT BOB WOULD NEVER BE IN TIME FOR HIS REAR ATTACK ON THE GERMAN ARMOURED REGIMENT.



THEN AN IDEA OCCURRED TO TRACY. OBVIOUSLY MARIO IN HIS CAREFREE WAY WAS NOT INTENDING TO TAKE ACTION ABOUT THIS COLUMN BELOW. TRACY MADE UP HIS MIND THAT MARIO SHOULD TAKE VERY DEFINITE ACTION. IT WAS THEIR ONLY HOPE.



TRACY FIGURED THAT IF BOB COULD NOT GET AT THE GERMAN REGIMENT IN TIME, THEN THE GERMANS WOULD HAVE TO COME OUT AND MEET BOB.



AND THE
ONLY WAY
TO DO THAT IS
TO MAKE MARIO
REPORT OUR
BOYS TO THE
GERMAN REGIMENT.
BUT HOW?

TRACY KNEW MARIO WOULD NOT REPORT ANYTHING . . . HE WAS TOO EASY-GOING. SO HE BEGAN ARTFULLY TO PLAY ON THE ITALIAN LOVE OF SELF-DRAMATISM.

MARIO, I'M SURPRISED YOU'RE SO UNPATRIOTIC AS TO IGNORE THE THREAT OF THIS BRITISH COLUMN. YOUR COMRADES WOULD SURELY ACCLAIM YOU A HERO IF YOU WARNED THEM IN TIME TO SAVE THEIR LIVES.



AFTER MORE TALK LIKE THIS, MARIO BEGAN VISIBLY TO GROW IN SELF-IMPORTANCE.

ARE YOU A
SOLDIER, MARIO,
OR A PLAYBOY?

YOU ARE
RIGHT, MY FRIEND.
I HAVE A DUTY TO PERFORM.
I DO NOT MIND ABOUT THE
GERMANS BUT IF THESE BRITISH
SHOULD SURPRISE MY COUNTRYMEN...

AND WHEN MARIO HESITATED AS TO WHICH
REGIMENT SHOULD GET HIS REPORT... TRACY
HUNTINGLY SLIPPED IN A SUGGESTION...

A GOOD PATRIOT
WOULD ROUSE THE
NEAREST UNIT... SUCH
AS THE TWENTIETH
GERMAN ARMoured
CAR REGIMENT,
FOR INSTANCE.

AH... SI, SI!
I KNOW THEM. THEY
SNEER AT US ITALIANS
BUT THIS TIME THEY WILL
HAVE TO THANK AN
ITALIAN FOR RAISING
THE ALARM.

Chapter 3.

THE TRAP

EAGER TO PROVE HIMSELF TO THESE SCORNFUL GERMANS, MARIO SMARTLY LANDED AMONGST THE MASSED ARMOURED CARS OF THE 20TH REGIMENT. HIS RECEPTION WAS NONE TOO POLITE.



MARIO HURRIED TO THE TENT OF THE COMMANDING OFFICER, MAJOR KRAUTZ... A TYPICAL LITTLE TURKEY-COCK OF A GERMAN.

AN ITALIAN PILOT TO SEE YOU, HERR MAJOR... AND TWO BRITISH PRISONERS.

WELL, DON'T JUST STAND THERE... BRING THEM TO ME AT ONCE!



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MARIO EAGERLY TOLD HIS STORY; UNAWARE THAT MAJOR KRAUTZ WAS COLDLY RECOGNISING BILL TRACY AS THE MAN WHO HAD ONCE SWUNG HIM BY HIS BELT SO IGNOMINIOUSLY.

...A GREAT COLUMN OF BRITISH ARMOUR,
MAJOR KRAUTZ...APPROACHING FROM THE
SOUTH! THIS BRITISH OFFICER, CAPTAIN
TRACY, AND THE SOLDIER,
I TAKE PRISONER!

SO! A
DESPICABLE
BRITISH COLUMN
EH? TRYING TO
SURPRISE US,
HEIN? WE
WILL SEE!



REMEMBERING HIS HUMILIATION AT TRACY'S HANDS, KRAUTZ COULD BARELY CONTAIN HIS FURY. AND BILL TRACY GUESSED THAT HIS HARMLESS PRANK ON THE GERMAN WAS ABOUT TO RECOIL WITH INTEREST.

'WE WILL SEE, CAPTAIN TRACY, WHO SHALL SWING WHO BY THE BELT! WE SHALL SWING THIS BRITISH COLUMN BY ITS NECK
AND YOU WILL SEE ME DO IT... PIGDOG !



SHOUTING IN ALL DIRECTIONS, MAJOR KRAUTZ ORDERED AN IMMEDIATE TURN-OUT OF THE WHOLE REGIMENT. IT WAS PLAIN HE MEANT TO AVENGE HIMSELF ON TRACY BY SAVAGING THE BRITISH COLUMN BEFORE TRACY'S OWN EYES.

GET INTO
THE TRUCK...
QUICKLY!



TRACY SNATCHED A FEW MUTTERED WORDS WITH BLACKIE.

MY PLAN IS WORKING OUT BUT I DIDN'T BANK ON THE WHOLE MOB GOING, BLACKIE. OUR BOYS WILL GET A SHOCKING MAULING FROM THIS LOT.



MARIO, ATTRACTED BY THIS EXCITING SITUATION, INSISTED ON GOING, TOO.



IT WAS EVENING BEFORE THE POWERFUL REGIMENT FINALLY MOVED OFF TO THE SOUTH.



WITH THE COMING OF DARK, NO SIGN OF THE BRITISH HAD BEEN SEEN SO MAJOR KRAUTZ HALTED HIS COLUMN ON A HIGH PLATEAU TO AWAIT REPORTS FROM HIS SCOUTS.



CREEPING WELL FORWARD THE GERMAN PATROL CAR SPIED THE APPROACH OF BOB WATSON'S COLUMN AND SPED BACK, UNDETECTED, TO HERDST.



44
MAJOR KRAUTZ RECEIVED THIS NEWS WITH GRIM SATISFACTION, TAKING A MALICIOUS DELIGHT IN THE CONCERN ON BILL TRACY'S FACE.



TRACY AND BLACKIE STOOD HELPLESSLY WATCHING MAJOR KRAUTZ
DEPLOY HIS ARMOUR ALONG THE PLATEAU EDGE.



IN A FEW MINUTES THE GERMANS HAD ALIGNED THEMSELVES IN BATTLE-ORDER, EVERY MAN EAGER FOR A GLIMPSE OF THE DOOMED COLUMN. TRACY REGARDED THE LINE OF WICKED-LOOKING GUN MUZZLES WITH MOUNTING ANXIETY.



SINCE MORNING BOB WATSON HAD LED THE COLUMN AT A TESTING PACE. ACHING EYES AND WEARY MUSCLES DID THEIR DUTY MECHANICALLY, BUT THE GOAL WAS IN SIGHT. BY DAWN THEY WOULD BE IN POSITION TO ATTACK!



BACK ON THE PLATEAU THERE CAME ONE OF THOSE SUDDEN STILLNESSES. AND IN THAT ABRUPT QUIET EVERYBODY HEARD A FAR-OFF SOUND.



EVERY WAITING GERMAN LISTENED AGAIN... YES, IT WAS THE BRITISH COMING! QUIETLY EVERY MAN SLIPPED INTO ACTION POSITIONS.

IT IS THE BRITISH, HERR TRACY!
NOW WATCH!



MARIO BEGAN TO FEEL VERY DIFFERENTLY ABOUT THINGS. NOT REALISING TILL NOW THE AWFUL CONSEQUENCES OF HIS ACTIONS, HIS SENSITIVE NATURE BECAME DEEPLY TROUBLED AT THE THOUGHT OF THIS INHUMAN SLAUGHTER. HE REMEMBERED THE CONTEMPTUOUS WAY HIS ALLIES HAD TREATED HIM... AND SUDDENLY MARIO HATED ALL GERMANS.



Chapter 4.

COUNTER-ATTACK

LEFT ALONE FOR A MOMENT WITH THE GUARD AND DRIVER, TRACY AND BLACKIE LOOKED AT ONE ANOTHER WITH SOMETHING LIKE DESPERATION... AND AN UNSPOKEN MESSAGE PASSED BETWEEN THEM.



WITHOUT WARNING, THEY ACTED AS ONE.

NOW!



Tracy of Tobruk



THEN TRACY SUDDENLY STOPPED AS THE ITALIAN, MARIO, CAME INTO VIEW FROM THE FRONT OF THE TRUCK.



THE NOISE OF THE TRUCK'S SELF-STARTER CAME TO THE EARS OF MAJOR KRAUTZ.



SUDDENLY THE DESPERATE TRACY MADE UP HIS MIND ABOUT MARIO, AND THE ITALIAN SEEMED TO GUESS HIS INTENTION.



MARIO KNEW EXACTLY WHAT TRACY MEANT AND, WITH A SMILE, POINTED TO HIS EYE.



THERE WAS NO TIME TO LOSE SO TRACY TOOK GRATEFUL ADVANTAGE OF THE OFFER.



MARIO WENT DOWN WITH PRAISEWORTHY REALISM,
BUT FOUND TIME TO WAVE GOODBYE.

I HOPE WE
MEET AGAIN,
SOME TIME,
MARIO!

SI, SI,
MY FRIEND,
ARRIVE DERC!

DRIVE LIKE
THE DEVIL!

DON'T
WORRY, SIR.
I WILL!

OOH!



IN A MOMENT POOR MARIO WAS CONFRONTED BY A FURIOUS KRAUTZ AND HIS OFFICERS. WITHOUT HESITATION THE ITALIAN POINTED THE WRONG WAY.

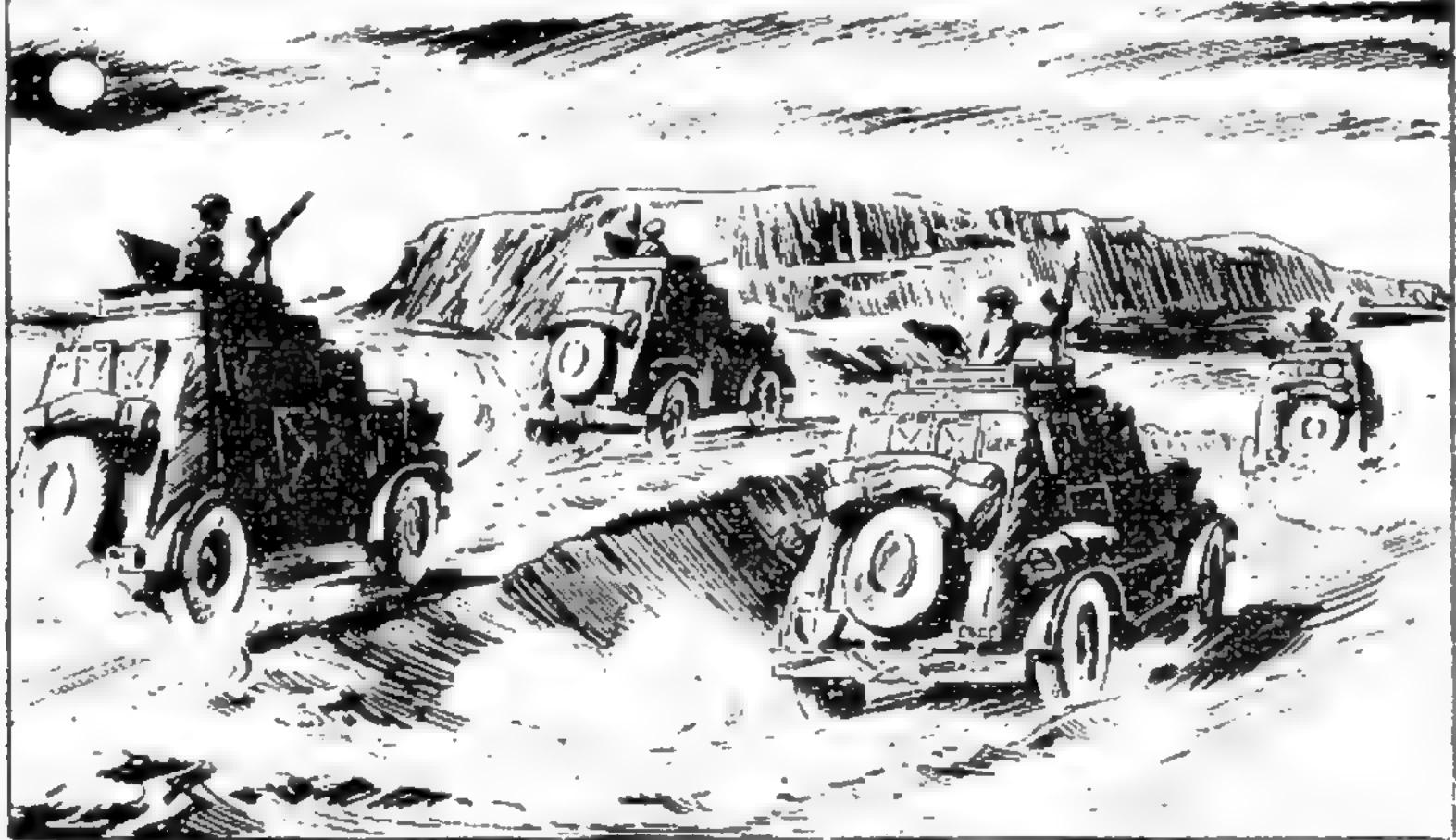
IMBECILE!
WHICH WAY
DID THOSE PIG-ENGLISH GO?

THAT WAY,
I THINK.
THEY HIT ME...
LOOK!

AT ONCE GERMANS WERE SENT IN THE WRONG DIRECTION IN PURSUIT, THEMSELVES PURSUDED BY THE ROARS OF THE LIVID KRAUTZ.

AFTER THEM...
DOLTS!

MEANWHILE BOB'S COLUMN WAS DRAWING EVER NEARER
THE WAITING GUNS OF THE EXULTANT ENEMY.



DRIVING LIKE A DEMON, BLACKIE
WRESTLED THE HURTLING TRUCK
DOWN THE CLIFF-EDGE TO
THE PLAIN BELOW.

BY GLORY,
BLACKIE! WE'LL
MAKE IT
YET!



WITH A JOLT THAT RATTLED THEIR TEETH, THE TRUCK HIT THE LEVEL PLAIN AND BEGAN THE RACE TO WARN BOB WATSON.

THERE
THEY ARE!
FASTER!

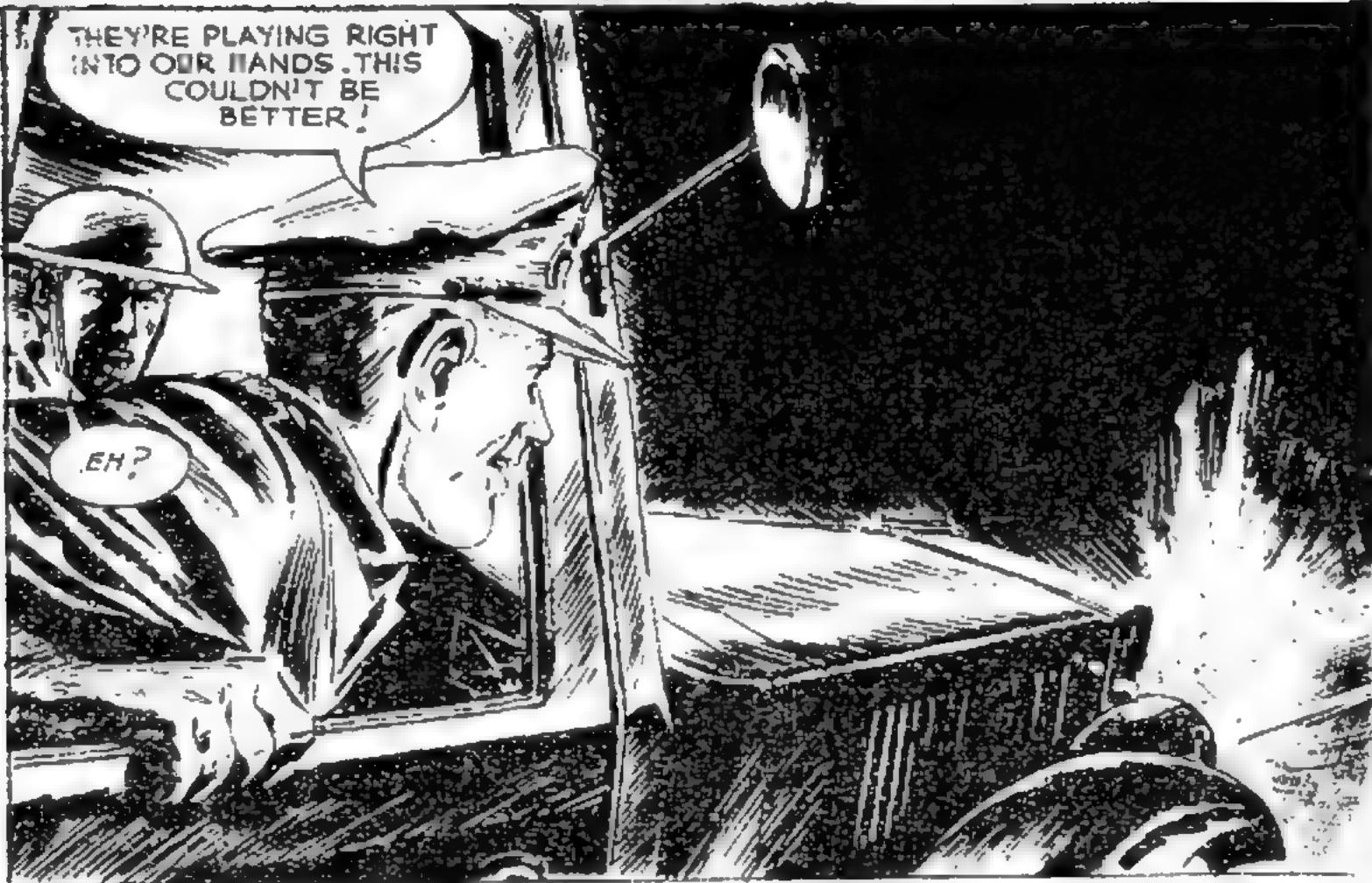
DOING
ME BEST,
SIR!

HEARING THE RACKET BELOW,
KRAUTZ RUSHED TO THE
CLIFF EDGE, SHOUTING
IMPOSSIBLE ORDERS.

THEY
THEY GO!
STOP THEM!

FORTUNATELY FOR BOB SOME OF THE GERMANS TOOK KRAUTZ' ORDER LITERALLY AND OPENED FIRE ON THE SPEEDING TRUCK.





SOON OTHER TRIGGER-HAPPY
GERMANS JOINED IN . . .



HEARING THE FIRING, BOB SENSIBLY BROUGHT HIS COLUMN TO A HALT.



AT LAST, WITH THE TRUCK PIERCED WITH BULLET HOLES BUT OTHERWISE INTACT, TRACY MADE A JOYFUL BUT BUSINESS-LIKE REUNION WITH THE COLUMN.

THANK HEAVENS!
BILL TRACY!

SAVE YOUR
COMPLIMENTS,
BOB, AND LISTEN
QUICKLY!



Tracy of Tobruk

IN A FEW CRISP WORDS BILL TRACY GAVE BOB THE SITUATION...

YOUR TARGET IS UP ON THAT CLIFF WAITING FOR YOU, BUT I'VE GOT A PLAN. PASS THE WORD BACK TO FOLLOW ME.

BY GEORGE!
YOU BET
I WILL!

WITH EVERY NERVE TAUT, THE BRITISH BOYS
PRESSED FORWARD IN THE WAKE OF
THEIR GALLANT YOUNG LEADER.

SAY, BOB...
REMEMBER HOW DRAKE
GOT HIS LITTLE SHIPS,
SO CLOSE THE ARMADA
COULDN'T SIGHT THEIR
GUNS? WELL,
WATCH THIS!

WITH EVERY MAN'S FINGER TWITCHING ON A TRIGGER, TRACY ARTFULLY LED HIS COLUMN SO CLOSE UNDER THE CLIFF THAT THE ENEMY COULD NOT BRING HIS GUNS TO BEAR.

BUT THEY HAVE COME TOO CLOSE, HERR MAJOR... WE CANNOT SIGHT OUR GUNS ON THEM!

FOOLS!



UNABLE TO TRAIN HIS GUNS ON THE EXASPERATING BRITISH, KRAUTZ ROARED FOR EVERY VEHICLE TO MOVE FORWARD.

ADVANCE! FIRE!



AS TRACY'S COLUMN MOVED INTO POSITION, HE GAVE A LONG PIERCING BLAST ON HIS WHISTLE. AT ONCE EVERY BRITISH GUN SPAT A CASCADE OF SHOT AND SHELL ALL ALONG THE RIM OF THE CLIFF.



IN A FEW SECONDS THE LOOSE SANDSTONE BEGAN TO CRUMBLE...



THEN THE CRUMBLING GREW TO A SLIDE...)



...AND THE SLIDE TURNED
TO AN AVALANCHE! THE
ECLIPSE OF MAJOR KRAUTZ
AND HIS 20TH. ARMOURED
CAR REGIMENT WAS AT HAND.



WHATEVER FIGHT REMAINED IN THE DEMORALISED ENEMY WAS SOON DOUSED BY A LAST FEARFUL BARRAGE FROM GRIM-LIPPED BRITISHERS.



BILL TRACY, WITH THE FEELING OF A JOB WELL DONE, DISENGAGED WITH THE BROKEN ENEMY AND LED HIS JUBILANT MEN TOWARDS TOBRUK. TRACY NOW KNEW THAT THE GALLANT DEFENDERS OF THAT TOWN WOULD AT LEAST BE SPARED THE ATTENTIONS OF WHAT WAS ONCE A POWERFUL GERMAN ARMOURED REGIMENT.



MARIO FORZIA STOOD LOOKING DOWN ON THE SHAMBLES WITH A WRY EXPRESSION.



JUST TOO
BAD FOR HERR
KRAUTZ! THE
LUCK OF THE
WAR, H'M?

BILL TRACY'S COLUMN ARRIVED AT TOBRUK IN TIME
TO JOIN IN THE SUCCESSFUL COUNTER-OFFENSIVE
AND TO WELCOME HIS OLD PALS WHO ALL THIS
TIME HAD SO BRAVELY HELD OUT IN THE
TOWN. ROMMEL WAS ON THE RUN !



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19.2.59.

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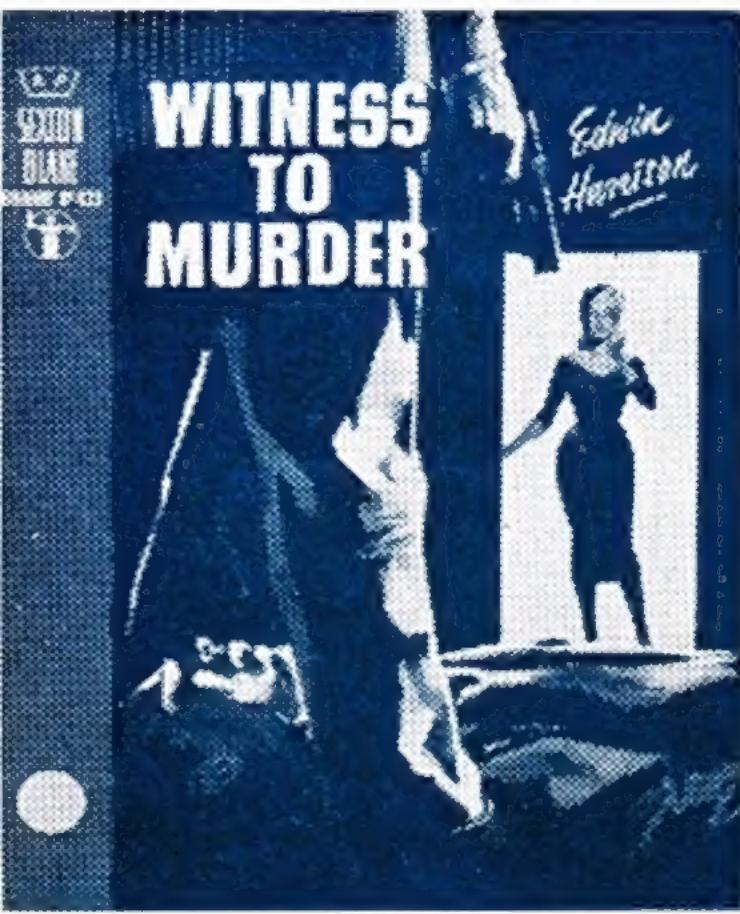
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